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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews ways in which teachers inadvertently reinforce negative behavior of elementary school students through negative verbal or nonverbal communication. Discussion first points out differences between nonverbal and verbal communication, and then focuses on consequences of negative communication for children. Special attention is given to teachers' use of judgmental vocabulary and demeaning labels, discourtesy, discouragement of verbal interaction, orders, demands, questions for which no real answer is expected, personal names as synonyms for commands, and domination of verbal exchanges. All of these forms of communication convey to children attitudes of aloofness, disrespect, lack of acceptance, and insensitivity. Also discussed are teachers' creation of a continually authoritarian classroom climate, use of mass punishment, assignment of blame for every discipline problem, use of threats for problem students, use of rejection and punitive behavior in response to student misbehavior that is threatening, and use of negative procedural feedback. Also addressed are the problems of teachers' structuring of emotional distance in the classroom, the impact of negative communication environments on students' self-esteem, and the "false fronts" of students who are depressed and have low self-esteem. (RH)

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How Teachers Inadvertently Reinforce Negative Behavior of Elementary School Students Through Negative Communications

by
Barbara Frederick

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Introduction

At a time when societal and cultural values are being challenged and changed, children often have difficulty in adapting. The role of family, school, and religion are currently in a state of flux. Guidelines for behavior consequently are becoming more and more vague. Children feel it is more difficult to develop a sense of adequacy when society does not clearly state what is valued.

Besides my church training, my classroom teachers played the most vital role in molding and shaping my life. They were sensitive to my needs.

Children who feel good about themselves do not abuse their bodies. A good attitude influences the kinds of friends we choose, how we get along with others and how productive we will be. A good attitude affects creativity, integrity, stability, and even whether we become leaders or followers.

Identify Problem

The purpose of this paper is to determine how teachers inadvertently reinforce negative behavior of elementary students through negative communications.

Procedure

This study is based on historical descriptive research.

A Review of Related Literature

Young children continually gather information about their value as persons through interactions with the adults that are significant in their lives. This process begins in the home but very quickly extends to the educational settings. Family members, caregivers, and teachers serve as the mirror through which children see themselves and then judge what they see. Kostelnik, Stein, and Whiren (1988) endorse the theory that if the image is negative, children will deduce that they have little worth. They become sensitive to the opinions adults have of them and often adopt them as their own.

In the classroom, teachers convey enhancing or damaging attitudes that frequently manifest themselves in what they say to children and how they say it. Such manifestations may or may not be the result of conscious decisions on their part. Yet teacher verbalizations play key roles in the degree to which children perceive themselves.

According to Verderber and Verderber (1989) communication is composed of two dimensions - verbal and non-verbal. Nonverbal communication may cover any aspect of communication that is not purely verbal. More precisely, non-verbal communication can be viewed from two different perspectives. From one perspective, nonverbal communication refers to people's actions or attributes other than words. From another perspective, however nonverbal

communication also refers to elements that neither come from nor are part of people but that communicate through people's use of them.

Nonverbal communication includes such overt behaviors as facial expressions, eyes, touching, and tone of voice; as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture, and spatial distance between two or more people. Also environmental factors such as furniture, lighting, temperature, and color also fall within the province of nonverbal communication.

Without uttering a single word, teachers and students constantly send messages to each other. In fact, consciously and unconsciously, they send and receive non-verbal cues several hundred times a day. Everything communicates - even silence communicates a message.

Research in communication suggests that more feelings and intentions are sent and received nonverbally than verbally. According to Miller (1988) seven percent of a message is sent through words with the remaining ninety-three percent sent through facial expressions and vocal intonations.

Nonverbal communication is the more trusted form when verbal and nonverbal messages seem to be in conflict. Verbal communication can be constructed purposefully to deceive; people place more stock in nonverbal cues. Non-verbal communication is usually spontaneous and percieved as more revealing.

Non-verbal communication gives more insight into emotional states of being. People vary widely in their verbal descriptions of how they are feeling, their non-verbal messages are likely to reflect their true feelings.

Verderber and Verderber (1989) found that many types of non-verbal communication proved to be recognizable across cultures. Verbal languages differ so much that people are unable to understand someone from another country, however they may be able to communicate in non-verbal signs. For instance: nodding and shaking the head, pointing, smiling, and frowning make up but a few non-verbal signs that help people understand one another even when they speak different languages. Studies show that people from different cultures often share the same facial expressions for such emotions as happiness, anger, fear, surprise, and so forth.

Anderson (1988) emphasizes that non-verbal behavior has several functions. It may supplement words, contradict your words, regulate the flow of verbal interaction, or even take the place of words.

Non-verbal communication is continuous. Whereas verbal symbols begin only when sound comes from the mouth and ends when the sound stops. Non-verbal communication continues for as long as a person is in your presence.

The student's understanding of our meaning depends to a greater extent on his interpretation of our gestures, facial

expressions, body language, intonation, and physical proximity rather than on the semantic and syntactic features of the words spoken.

The teacher-learner relationship is charged with psychological meaning and is instrumental in developing the learner's self-concept whether positive or negative, and the degree to which their potential is realized. The poorest teaching is clinical and impersonal. Teaching is more than just communicating content. Real teaching and real learning exist within a relationship - within a life context.

Since all of our interactions with others communicate something, it is important to ask what message is being given to children by an adult's refusal or hesitancy to interact physically with a child, except to push, pull, pound, or mold. Perhaps the child learns that the body is evil or dirty; or that anyone who does touch you is evil. Perhaps children learn that we do not want them near us, or that they are not really important, or that we do not care about them as individuals. Perhaps they learn that school is a boring, uncaring, unfriendly place, and should be avoided as much as possible.

Obviously, these would not be the lessons we want children to learn. According to Kostelnik, Stein, and Whiren (1988) these lessons may produce individuals who are uncomfortable with their own body and with closeness with others who have a limited or

shallow self-concept. This puts restrictions on children's ability to relate warmly and successfully with other people.

Adult participants in the early childhood setting create the verbal environment. Its components include words and silence - how much adults say, what they say, how they speak, to whom they talk and how well they listen. The manner in which these elements are enacted dictates children's estimations of self-worth.

Negative verbal environments cause children to feel unworthy, incompetent, unlovable or insignificant as a result of what adults say or do not say to them. Extreme illustrations include: adults screaming at children, making fun of them, swearing at them or making them the target of ethnic slurs. Less obvious, more common adult behaviors also contribute to negative verbal environments.

Adults show little or no interest in children's activities because they are in a hurry, busy, engrossed in their own thoughts and endeavors, or tired. They walk by children without comment and fail to acknowledge their presence. They do not talk to children when standing near them and respond only grudgingly to children's attempts to initiate an interaction. In addition, grownups misuse time designated for interaction with children by talking more with their colleagues than the youngsters. Children interpret these behaviors as obvious signs of disinterest.

Miller (1988) claims that teachers pay superficial attention to what children have to say. Instead of listening attentively, they ask irrelevant questions, respond inappropriately, fail to maintain eye contact or cut children off completely. Occasionally, they simply ignore the communication altogether, saying nothing, thus treating the children as if they were not present.

Adults speak discourteously to children. They interrupt children who are speaking to them, as well as youngsters who are talking to one another. They expect children to respond to their own requests immediately, not allowing them to finish what they are doing or saying. Their voice tone is demanding, impatient or belligerent, they neglect such social courtesies as "Excuse me", "Please" and "Thank you".

Kostelnik, Stein, Whiren (1988) contend that teachers use judgmental vocabulary in describing children to themselves and others. Typical demeaning labels include hyper, selfish, greedy, uncooperative, motor mouth, stubborn, grabby, and klutsy. Adults say these words directly to children or to another person within the child's hearing. Assuming in either case, that youngsters have no feelings, become invisible or deaf.

Kostelnik, Stein, and Whiren (1988) affirm that staff members actively discourage children from talking to them. They tell children that what they are doing or saying is uninteresting

or unimportant and that they should be doing or talking about something else. Thus youngsters hear admonitions like "I'm sick of hearing about your troubles with Rhonda; find someone else to talk about", or "I don't want to hear one more word about it, not one peep!" Sometimes adults put children off by saying "Hush, not now or tell me about it later". The later seldom comes.

Grownups rely on giving orders and making demands as their number one means of relating to children. Their verbalizations consist of directions (sit in your chair) and admonishments: No fighting, everybody get your coats off and settle down to lunch. Stop fooling around!

Adults ask questions for which no real answer is expected or desired. Typical queries might include: What do you think you're doing? Didn't I tell you not to stomp in the mud? When will you ever learn? Regardless of how children respond, their answers are viewed as disrespectful or unwelcome. Children soon learn that these remarks are not a real invitation to relate to the adult.

Madden (1988) reports that caregivers use the children's names as synonyms for the words no, stop, or don't. By barking out "Tony or Allison" as a reprimand, adults attack the essence of the child's being, thereby causing children to associate the most personal part of themselves with disapproval and rejection. When using this tactic adults fail to describe the objectionable behavior or to clarify the reason for the negative tone of voice,

thus leaving children with the notion that something is wrong with them as persons.

Adults dominate the verbal exchanges that take place each day. They do all the talking and allow children little time to respond either to them or their peers. This leaves little time for children to initiate conversations on topics of their own choosing. This leaves them feeling rushed and unsatisfied.

These behaviors convey to children adult attitudes of aloofness, disrespect, lack of acceptance and insensitivity. Such encounters tend to make children feel inadequate, confused, or angry.

Borich (1988) concludes that on the first day of class, some teachers spend the first fifteen minutes reading the students the "riot act". They are told that they must overcome their poor study habits and laziness because this class is tougher than all the others. Tests will be hard and some may not make it. The teacher seems to focus on what the children do not know. Using phrases such as "You should have gotten this in other courses or most everyone at this grade level should already know this."

Teachers in classrooms with high levels of disciplinary problems seem to want to put students on the defensive from the start. For example, these teachers use phrases such as: "If you disobey the rules in this classroom and I know some of you will, you will be punished!" "Some of you should expect to get failing

grades in here", or "Don't underestimate my ability to catch those of you who like to violate rules." Instead of seeing the bright side of things - or at least hoping the bright side would occur - these teachers seemed determined to create an aura of punishment, difficulty, and failure in their classrooms. It is not clear why these teachers act in such a manner, but one might surmise that they may think that by casting a scary light on things right from the start, they could prevent misbehavior from occurring. This seems to correspond with the teacher's lack of confidence in teaching skills. Whatever the reason for their negativity, it was not difficult for some students in these classrooms to conclude that since they were so "bad", the teacher might be disappointed if they did not live up to expectations. These teachers, therefore may have created their own self-fulfilling prophecy - one that students made sure would come true.

Curwin and Mendler (1988) speculate that misbehavior is often the only way a student can cope with living in an adverse environment. It keeps students sane and maintains their integrity.

Closely associated with teacher's negativity is the rigid, authoritarian climate that usually prevails in these classrooms. Outward appearances would indicate that these teachers seem to value being a stern disciplinarian even more than being a good teacher. The authoritarian atmosphere in the classroom takes the form of high amounts of teacher talk with little or no acceptance

or solicitation of student responses. The aim of these teachers seems to be a desire to be in absolute command at all times and to be the only worthwhile source of anything to be discussed or learned. Again, one suspects that this rigid, almost military atmosphere might be a cover for anxieties about lacking control. The apparent solution is to arrange instruction in the most rigid of formats to prevent the slightest opportunity for misbehavior to occur.

Teachers have the opportunity to see how they contribute to creating situations that foster discipline problems; examples are: developing lessons that stimulate little motivation, offering students little or no hope for behavioral or academic success, forcing students to back down in front of their peers, and providing students with few choices or none at all. Also, we deny students acceptable opportunities to express their feelings.

There can be no potentially embarrassing moments when absolute control is in the hands of the teacher. Although being useful for the teacher, such extreme rigidity provokes rebelliousness in some learners. This strategy might work in a military school, but not in the typical public school classroom.

A continually authoritarian climate is often an invitation for some students to test the limits of the teacher's authority. Due to the strength in numbers, these teachers may be challenged by more than one student. The teacher's response to this challenge

often results in an even greater challenge on the part of students until a major confrontation arose to create disorder and confusion.

There is little doubt among experienced teachers that effective classroom order and discipline depends as much on the voluntary cooperation of students as it does on a clear communication of rules and the ability to enforce them.

Students sometimes test the limits of an overly authoritarian teacher. In problem classrooms, it is not unusual for teachers to engage in an emotional outburst as a response to some misbehavior; the teacher's voice increases in volume and pitch and a shouting match occurs. As an emotional outburst fails to solve the problem, the teacher is left in the uncomfortable position of having few more intense responses. Although emotional responses may be effective at times, consistent use diminishes their effectiveness at the time they may be needed most.

When a cycle of misbehavior occurs involving a large number of students in one of these classrooms, a common response is to assign punishment to the entire class.

Extra homework in the upper grades and purposeless writing assignments for the lower grades is the most frequently chosen punishment. The assignment is a response to the misbehavior so that the teacher could be sure that every single student who misbehaved was punished. However, a deep resentment to such an extent is felt by the ones who did not misbehave that few of them

have the enthusiasm to stay on task or to cooperate in the learning task for the remainder of the period. Perhaps, the teacher assumes that peer pressure from those who did behave would influence the others to conform to classroom rules and procedures.

Hardin (1989) demonstrates that students who disobey often come from a different peer group than those who frequently disobey and therefore have little or no influence over the latter either i or out of school. Sometimes these peer groups seem so at odds with each other that they actually derive pleasure from seeing the obedient wrongly punished along with themselves - and maybe even repeat the misbehavior to derive the same pleasure again. These social facts explain why mass punishment is seldom, if ever, a lasting solution for misbehavior. Like an emotional outburst, mass punishment escalates the teacher's response to one of its highest levels.

Shenkle (1989) reports another behavior as the tendency to blame someone for every discipline problem. These teachers seem to know the trouble makers and blame them repeatedly even when the true source of the problem may have been in doubt.

Teacher use such phrases as, "You're at it again", "You've created trouble in here since the beginning, and you won't get away with it this time", to identify the supposed culprit responsible for throwing paper, making a noise, or disrupting others behind the

teacher's back.

Sometimes, the true source of the problem is a group of students which includes the one singled out, and sometimes the true source is unidentifiable. In either case, the teacher makes an error in judgment. The response of the one being blamed is to quickly and loudly correct the error by attributing blame to others. The troublemaker responds that he is not the only one. In the meantime, the class is disrupted by the teacher's preoccupation with a single individual.

At the root of this problem is the teacher's misguided notion that every misbehavior must be attributed to someone. In these teacher's minds, winners and losers exist, and they themselves intend to never be the loser, regardless of the cost of the conflict to classroom morale and instructional time.

Several guidelines, concerning the development of children's expectations and self-concepts, flow from the literature on the communication of expectations, labels, and attributions of behavior to causes. According to a study by Brophy (1988), it is likely that children will acquire the beliefs, attitudes and expectations that teachers model and articulate. These include beliefs, attitudes, and expectation about the children themselves (whether they are basically good or evil; whether they are trying to do the right thing, and whether they will be able to do the right thing if they try.) Problem children need to be told that they are normal,

well-meaning individuals who want to improve their behavior. However, efforts can be frustrated with the use of negative expectations (e.g., using labels implying that the problem students are deviant or defective).

Sometimes teachers threaten or pressure the problem student into changing his or her behavior. This includes specific behavioral criticism, global personal criticism, sarcasm, or ridicule, diagnosing - in a manner that constitutes criticism, or attack on the student rather than an attempt to help or explain. Third-degree methods of grilling the student at length about his or her presumably blameworthy motives, intentions, and actions can be devastating. Many times accusatory and redundant or rhetorical questions invoke peers to threaten. Also, parents may be used in this same manner.

Teachers become rejecting and punitive when student misbehavior is threatening rather than merely irritating. Even frequent misconduct does not seem to impair most teacher-student relationships so long as the misconduct is not disruptive or aggressive (i.e., it is confined to such problems as hyperactivity, distractibility, excessive socializing with peers, or forgetfulness about classroom responsibilities and the student responds positively or at least neutrally to the teacher's interventions). However, teachers respond quite negatively to hostile-aggressive and especially defiant students. Also, this carries over to any

student who displays a surly or insolent attitude during disciplinary interactions.

Recent evidence by Madden (1988) shows that students often feel that their worth is questionable whenever they displease a teacher. Their feelings about themselves become contingent on teacher's judgments of their performance. Those who are unable to meet teacher expectations tend to gravitate toward one side of the continuum and, ultimately decide to give up trying. They become discouraged and tend to act out their disappointment by misbehaving. Their behavior can be described as attempts to gain attention, power, or revenge, or to exhibit inadequacy.

Teachers seem to offer more criticism for conduct of low achievers according to a study by Mitman and Lash (1988). This study involves thirteen classes of third graders, half being high achievers and the other half low. Thirteen teachers of self-contained third grade classes in suburban northern California volunteered to participate. Behavioral interactions between each teacher and target students were observed for seven full days at intervals throughout the school year.

Most procedural communication is negative, consisting of reactions to violations and lacking explanations for following rules.

Ineffective teachers do not teach classroom rules and procedures, they don't monitor student compliance with rules or

follow through with consequences quickly and consistently. They do not establish a system of student responsibility and accountability for work, don't communicate information clearly or organize instructional activities. Evertson (1988) concludes that they do not discriminate between appropriate and inappropirate classroom behavior. Rule-setting relates to the degree of order that prevails in a class.

Teacher's negative procedural feedback could affect children's correlations with adult attitudes and judgments for a variety of reasons. Teachers who give more frequent negative procedural feedback may be less effective socializers because children disregard or devalue their messages. At the same time, such teachers are also focusing less on academic matters.

Children rate the importance of adhering to classroom norms lower when teachers focus more heavily on procedures. This may be because children perceive procedures as being more arbitrary and less important than other topics. Further, most children respond less positively to teachers who use uninformative communication. Although, we could argue that teachers who provide a great deal of negative procedural feedback should have students who know their views better.

Educational studies of teacher's communication suggest that teachers pay more attention to bad deeds than to good deeds. Elementary school teachers most often try to influence children's

behavior by referring to negative behaviors after their occurrence, according to a study by Mitman and Lash (1988).

Some teachers often underestimate the self-doubts and anxieties of high-achievers confronted by test situations, yet at the same time, they overestimate the fears and anxieties of low achievers. These misperceptions often lead to misjudgment of difficulties.

Itskowitz, Navon, and Strauss (1988) conclude that teachers categorize their students in three groups of emotional distance: those to whom they feel attached, those to whom they are indifferent, and those whom they reject. These emotional categories often arise in the first days of class contact. Empirical studies highlight the biasing effect of closeness on teacher's perception and judgment of students, at least in regard to educationally relevant qualities. Children to whom they feel close seem to be seen in a more positive light in terms of intelligence, talent, achievement, motivation, and cooperation with teachers and others. The rejected children seem to be perceived more negatively along these same lines. Those viewed indifferently will likely be in the category with the rejected children.

Although emotional bias has been considered primarily in regard to teachers direct assessment of children's qualities, it is likely that these effects should carry over to their assessment of how children view themselves. Teachers are likely to alter their understanding of children's self-views to bring them more in line

with their own view of their pupils.

A sizeable research literature by Itskowitz, Navon, and Strauss (1988) shows that positive social regard and acceptance from central social figures strikingly improves self-concept. In contrast, an equal measure of criticism or rejection may lead to reductions in self-concept. The teacher's emotional distance from the child might possibly influence the child's self-image, as well as the teacher's perceptions of it.

According to Guskey's (1988) theory teachers tend to take more responsibility for positive outcomes than for negative outcomes. Teachers also tend to take more responsibility for the learning outcomes of high-ability students. Teachers feel that they have less control over low ability students and therefore less influence on their learning. While teachers in Guskey's study did tend to accept less responsibility for negative outcomes, they accepted it more readily for groups than for individuals. In the case of individuals, teachers tend to attribute failure to situational factors out of their control.

Kostelnik, Stein and Whiren (1988) report that adult's messages to children convey competence or inadequacy. Through their verbalizations teachers create a climate in their classroom that is called the verbal environment, a key factor in the degree to which children develop high or low self-esteem. Such environments take on a positive or negative theme. Continual

exposure to a negative verbal environment diminishes children's self-esteem.

Negative thoughts and feelings can be manifested in various negative self-image types. Contrary to popular belief, low self esteem is not manifested in a singular manner such as saying, "I'm no good" or indicating nonverbablly, "I'm no good" by slouched posture. Low self esteem can take on many different manifestations. Research by Frey and Carlock (1988) depicts the false facades which children of depression and low self-esteem express.

Scared Rabbit

This person is hypersensitive and appears to be emotionally fragile. He/she sends out messages to others verbally and nonverbally which say, "Don't confront me, I might fall apart", and "Be careful with me, I'm fragile." Consequently, others back away and this person misses opportunities to grow due to a lack of constructive criticism. This person needs a change in focus to become more positive about self. It would be beneficial for this person to become more aware of internal conflicts and realize that external feedback will not crush and defeat. He/she needs to become familiar with inner strengths.

Ostrich

This person denies both self and reality. His/her reaction to confrontation is usually, "What do you mean, it's not so bad."

Often, these individuals, in an attempt to deny their negative self-feelings, live vicariously through sports, television, and movies. They will go to extremes not to admit negative self-feelings to others as well as to self. This person needs more self-awareness and self-vitality. He/she can develop this by facing people, problems, and events. Learning more problem-solving skills would also aid.

Clown

This individual manifests low self esteem by excessive laughing and joking. This person is motivated by the idea. "I'll make fun of me before you make fun of me." This person strives to make everything very superficial and funny to escape hurt or having to deal with negative self-thoughts.

This person needs to take self, others, and the environment more seriously. He/she needs both to learn to deal with others realistically and realize he/she will not be ridiculed. These individuals need to learn to get positive attention in other ways.

Tough Guy

"Keep out", "Keep your distance", "I don't need you", are common attitudes with this negative type. These people put on such a tough exterior that few are inclined or able to interact on a personal level with them.

Tough guys need to accept the fact that they have needs. It is their fear of having needs that frequently leads into this

negative self-image type. Tough guys need to accept their soft feelings and allow for intimacy with others.

The Whiner

These people are fond of saying, "I can't do it" in a high, whiny voice. Over-dependency is the crucial dynamic of this type. The negative self esteem of such people is very evident by their attitude of helplessness.

This person needs to become more aware of inner resources and trust in self more. They need to take more risks.

Pollyanna

"Everything is just wonderful" and "Life is just a bowl of cherries" are statements reflecting this negative type. People avoid individuals with this attitude because such behavior is merely an attempt to mask negative self-feelings. It seems as if Pollyannas believe that if they express this attitude enough, it will be true. Pollyannas need to deal with the fear of looking at themselves. Self-acceptance and honesty are two important elements in overcoming this attitude. Learning to face conflicts rather than smoothing them over advances this person further toward positive self-esteem

Malleable Person

These individuals are very self-effacing and approval seeking. Comments such as "Whatever you say", and "I don't care", are attitudes expressed by this type. They care so little for

themselves that they can be molded in any direction. They are obsequious to others. Malleable persons need self-definition. They also need to learn to feel comfortable in the spotlight and accept attention.

The Ghost

This person fades into the woodwork and makes comments expressing the attitude of "I'm not here", "I'm nothing". They attempt to go unnoticed since they do not regard themselves very highly. They think that they will not be a target for criticism if they remain invisible. Also, if they are invisible, they cannot be expected to give in any way to others. The ghost type begins this behavior as a defense mechanism. Ghost types need to learn that they are capable of giving and receiving both positives and negative feedback.

These types are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some individuals became a blend of types depending on their own life experiences and situations. Nevertheless, it is helpful in studying low self esteem to become aware of its many faces and images. It aids in a more thorough and in-depth understanding. Regardless of the type of negative self-image, all these individuals experience high levels of psychological pain.

Verbal clues are often symptoms of low self-esteem. A person might say such things as, "I'm stupid", "I'm ugly", or "Don't ask me, I wouldn't know". Some other characteristics

include: boasting, exaggerating, fearing to express their ideas, and excessive apologizing.

Physical appearance also can be indicative of those lacking in self esteem. Those whose appearance reflects neglect or extreme perfectionism often reflect negative feelings about self. Physical appearance also includes gait, posture, eye contact, and other other nonverbal indications. People who seldom maintain eye contact and who slouch in their chairs may lack self esteem.

The way teachers interact with a student has a long lasting effect on the child's self esteem and behavior. Often, we tend to be inconsistent in our demands. Chronic inconsistency is a definite deterrent to positive self-esteem, children need limits and often they will probe until they find a level of consistency. If this level canonot be found, their behavior becomes increasingly disorganized and they become more anxious, insecure, and angry.

Some children hear mostly or solely negative feedback. Five rewards for every one punishment is optimal in aiding children to develop to their potential. If children experiences mostly negative feelings, an obvious correlate is that they will begin to develop low self esteem.

Frequently, we are unaware of how negatively we relate to children. We assume the child understands that positive behavior is appreciated and do not comment. At the same time, we are quick to tell children what is not appreciated. We frequently take for

grated that which is satisfactory or positive and becomes very vocal about what is negative to us.

Self-worth can be greatly diminished or destroyed when an individual experiences repeated failures. In response to these failures, individuals appear to adopt behavior at one end of a continuum or another. They often drop out of society or become compulsive overachievers in an attempt to overcompensate for their feelings of inadequacy.

Often when people feel no purpose to their life, no direction or goals, they wander aimlessly. They feel that life is meaningless.

Recent research by Curwin and Mendler (1988) indicates that most students do the best they can, even in adverse environments. Teachers should consider carefully what they say to children and make purposeful attempts to make children feel good about themselves. All students need hope.

A positive classroom environment comes from the heart and soul of the teacher. It comes from the belief that teaching students to take responsibility for their actions is as important as teaching the history or math lesson.

Gettinger (1988) affirms that research over the past twenty years suggests that successful classroom management involves not merely responding effectively when problems occur, but also preventing problems from occuring by creating environments that

encourage learning and appropriate behavior.

Seeman (1988) supports the theory that interaction is the most important and influential factor in setting the classroom tone. Reacting to students and analyzing those aspects foster the teacher-student relationship.

The use of praise and criticism should be considered carefully by the teacher as factors having an effect on the climate of the classroom and the self-concept of the individual student. Reinforced feedback is important for the development of student self-confidence and motivation. Criticism is linked negatively to these learning factors. Studies by Wilen, Ishler, and Kindsvatter (1988) describe criticism as impairing learning because it decreases motivation and damages self-esteem.

Conclusions

Teacher's communication makes a definite difference in the lives of children. It is impossible to measure the degree of value teachers make in a child's life. A child comes eagerly to a pleasant environment!

A good attitude is the mainspring that slates each of us for success or failure as a human being. Although a child who likes himself does better in school, there is far more to be gained than academic achievement.

Correcting Inadvertent Behaviors

Rather Than Say or Do This	Do This
1. Pull a child to you.	1. Ask him to come to you.
2. Fail to acknowledge child's presence.	1. Stop to greet. 2. Share a hug.
3. Screaming at children.	1. Use moderate tone.
4. Giving orders.	1. Try "please" and "thank you".
5. Using child's name as a reprimand.	1. Identify objectional behavior.
6. Dominate verbal exchange.	1. Provide time for children to initiate conversations.
7. Create an aura of punishment.	1. See the bright side. 2. Solicite student response. 3. Clear communication of rules. 4. Expect cooperation!
8. Mass punishment.	1. Ask innocent to raise his/her hand.
9. Blame someone for every discipline problem.	1. Walk over to the area where problem exists as you continue your teaching.

10. Paying more attention to bad deeds than to good deeds.

1. Praise students for their effort.
2. Tell them that they are good, well-meaning, and capable.
3. Hold high expectations.
4. Be consistent.

Interview

Jim McMurtrie, Counselor and Minister of Music

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This gentleman sees the breakdown of the home as a negative influence. Fifty percent of our families end in the divorce courts. There is no real commitment. These broken homes lead to economic problems and the mother entering the work force.

Also, television is a tremendously bad influence on both our youth and adults. Prime time television also needs monitoring.

Drug and alcohol abuse is rampant. Peer pressure is in full force.

More youth see counselors today than ever before in history. The teenage suicide rate continues to escalate.

The breakdown of values in every segment of our society leads to mixed signals. We need a return to commitment.

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